

Expert Opinions

Ian Duncan, Ph.D.

Dr. Duncan on Battery Cages(1)

(UEP guidelines recommend barren battery cages.)

“Hens in battery cages are prevented from performing several natural behaviour patterns....The biggest source of frustration is undoubtedly the lack of nesting opportunity.”(2)

“The lack of physical space may actually prevent them from adopting certain postures or performing particular behaviours.”(3)

“[T]he difficulty of inspecting cages means that the welfare of the birds is at some risk.”(4)

“The lack of space in battery cages reduces welfare by preventing hens from adopting certain postures—such as an erect posture with the head raised—and performing particular behaviors—such as wing-flapping.”(5)

Dr. Duncan on “Beak Trimming”

(UEP guidelines recommend “beak trimming” without painkiller.)

“There is now good morphological, neurophysical, and behavioral evidence that beak trimming leads to both chronic and acute pain.”(6)

Dr. Duncan on Forced Molting

(UEP guidelines do not prohibit forced molting.)

“[T]he evidence suggests that hens suffer enormously during forced molting.”(7)

Joy Mench, Ph.D.

Dr. Mench on Battery Cages

(UEP guidelines recommend barren battery cages.)

Note: *Dr. Mench sat on the UEP’s advisory committee for its animal welfare guidelines, which recommend 67 square inches of cage space per bird for white laying hens, an amount of space Dr. Mench calls “meager”:*

“The recommended space allowance for laying hens in some countries is 60-80 square inches per hen, barely enough for the hen to turn around and not enough for her to perform normal comfort behaviors; however, many hens are allowed less than even that meager amount.”(8)

Dr. Mench on “Beak Trimming”

(UEP guidelines recommend “beak trimming” without painkiller.)

Mench: “Chickens explore their environment with their beaks. They like to pick things up, and that’s their main way of exploring and touching and feeling things.”

NPR: “So, cutting off the beak is a big deal, if you’re a hen?”

Mench: “It’s definitely a big deal.”(9)

Dr. Mench on Forced Molting

(UEP guidelines do not prohibit forced molting.)

“The bird is starved. Yes, the bird is starved. I don’t like to see hungry animals not being given food.”(10)

Lesley J. Rogers, Ph.D.

Dr. Rogers on Battery Cages

(UEP guidelines recommend barren battery cages.)

Referring to battery cages, Dr. Rogers writes: “In no way can these living conditions meet the demands of a complex nervous system designed to form a multitude of memories and make complex decisions.”(11)

Michael Baxter, Ph.D.

Dr. Baxter on Battery Cages

(UEP guidelines recommend barren battery cages.)

“The space available in a battery cage does not allow hens even to stand still in the way they would in a more spacious environment. Some behaviours are completely inhibited by confinement in a cage causing a progressive accumulation of motivation to perform the behaviours.”(12)

“When crowded together this regulatory system breaks down and the hens appear to be in a chronic state of social stress, perpetually trying to get away from their cagemates, not able to express dominance relations by means of spacing and not even able to resolve social conflict by means of aggression.”(13)

“[T]he frustration of nesting motivation is likely to cause significant suffering to the hen during the prelaying period every day.”(14)

“Hens without access to perches may have more welfare problems resulting from increased aggression, reduced bone strength, impaired foot condition and higher feather loss.”(15)

"The fact that hens are restricted from exercising to such an extent that they are unable to maintain the strength of their bones is probably the greatest single indictment of the battery cage. The increased incidence of bone breakage which results is a serious welfare insult."(16)

Michael Appleby, Ph.D.

Dr. Appleby on the UEP Guidelines

"We believe the egg industry still has a long way to go before they can claim to be treating animals humanely....The proposal put forth recognizes that animal welfare is a consideration, but it fails to address the worst abuses that are standard practice in the egg industry."(17)

Eric Dunayer, DVM

Dr. Dunayer on the UEP Guidelines

"In the end, the UEP's guidelines do little more than codify already present industry practices. The proposed increase in space allotted to each chicken is both insignificant and falls well short of the area a chicken needs to carry out her normal behaviors."(18)

The Humane Society of the United States

"The United Egg Producers is not tackling the systematic abuses within the industry that severely compromise the welfare of individual birds....[The UEP guidelines] seem designed more to mollify consumers than to address the extreme animal welfare abuses that have become the norm in this industry."(19)

References

1. Dr. Duncan also has some positive comments on the welfare of hens in battery cages, mainly that they are more hygienic than production systems which group thousands of birds together on a floor, as is practiced by many so-called "cage-free" egg facilities. As well, hens seem to prefer to live in smaller groups of birds than in much larger ones containing thousands of birds, as is the practice of many "cage-free" but not necessarily truly free-range commercial egg facilities.
2. Ian J. Duncan. "The Pros and Cons of Cages," *World's Poultry Science Journal* 2001: 57, p. 385.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 383.
5. Ian J. Duncan. "Thirty Years of Progress in Animal Welfare Science," *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 1998: 1, pp. 151-154.
6. Ian J. Duncan. "The Science of Animal Well-Being." A report from a speech in the *Animal Welfare Information Center Newsletter*, National Agriculture Library, 1993 (Jan. – March): 4.1, p. 5. As cited in Karen Davis' *Prisoned Chickens, Poisoned Eggs* (Book Publishing Company, 1996, p. 68).
7. Ian J. Duncan. "Thirty Years of Progress in Animal Welfare Science," *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 1998: 1, pp. 151-154.

8. David Fraser, Joy Mench, Suzanne Millman. "Farm Animals and Their Welfare in 2000," *State of the Animals 2001*, Humane Society Press, 2001, p. 90.
9. "McDonald's & Farming," National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" program aired on April 15, 2002. <http://discover.npr.org/features/feature.jhtml?wfld=1141753>.
10. Ibid.
11. Lesley J. Rogers. *The Development of Brain and Behaviour in the Chicken*. (Wallingford, Oxon, UK: CAB International, 1995, p. 218).
12. Michael R. Baxter. "The Welfare Problems of Laying Hens in Battery Cages," *The Veterinary Record* 1994: 134, p. 617.
13. Ibid., p. 618.
14. Ibid., p. 618.
15. Ibid., p. 615.
16. Ibid., p. 618.
17. HSUS press release entitled, "HSUS Says Egg Industry Guidelines Don't Go Far Enough," June 27, 2002. <http://www.hsus.org/ace/14515>.
18. Eric Dunayer, DVM. Letter dated May 8, 2003, regarding new UEP guidelines.
19. HSUS press release entitled, "HSUS Says Egg Industry Guidelines Don't Go Far Enough," June 27, 2002. <http://www.hsus.org/ace/14515>.